

printing. This method resembles very nearly that plan of dovetailing which is commonly adopted in children's dissecting maps, viz. a circular dovetail on the casting of each alternate pipe is inserted into a corresponding aperture left for the purpose in the substance of the tube next adjoining it, and so on. The company, foreseeing the possibility of injury to their wires, have provided at the end of each mile, a box, in which the continuous line of wire is coiled, for the length of some few yards, so that, should any mischance occur, the means of testing the soundness of the line, mile by mile, are at hand; for all that is requisite in such a contingency will be the severance of the coiled wire at the end of any given mile, and a trial of its efficacy up to that point by means of a portable battery. We understand that similar underground telegraphs will be proceeded with as rapidly as may be to other important towns, both inland and on the coast. Indeed, the complete success of the present experiment of carrying a telegraph beneath instead of over the surface of the ground, seems to remove any difficulties which may have been supposed to exist to a direct telegraphic communication between all sufficiently important places in the kingdom, whether proximate or not to a line of railway. The expense is of course considerably more.

Various messages were passed between Paris and London, somewhat interfered with by the dampness of the atmosphere on the French side, where the wires are not insulated. Amongst these was one to the President, wherein the company said,—"May this wonderful invention serve, under the Empire, to promote the peace and prosperity of the world." We do not hear that the toadyism which prompted this unnecessary observation has been honoured with a reply.

The engineers of the company are Messrs. Wollaston and Crampton; to the latter of whom much is due for the successful initiation of the submarine telegraph.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CINQUE-CENTO GLASS PAINTINGS.

It appears in your correspondent "F. W. O."'s letter to *THE BUILDER* of the 16th Oct. (which I have had no leisure to notice earlier) that the simple point of controversy between us is, as to the truth of the two first, and as to the meaning to be attached to the last of the following paragraphs, which I used, on a former occasion, in speaking of the Cinque-Cento style of glass-painting. 1. "Here complicated foreground groups are introduced." 2. "The relative distances of the various objects are preserved by means of light and shade, and the landscape background, monotonous as it may appear in comparison with that of an oil or fresco painting, recedes, and disengages itself from the figures and architecture, imparting to the picture an effect of atmosphere." 3. "In the pictures of the Cinque-Cento period, the strongest contrasts of colour, and of light and shade are employed."

Your correspondent impugns the truth of the first paragraph, because he does not find any complicated foreground group in any of the windows of the Chapel of the Miraculous Sacrament at Brussels. To which I answer, first, that I never meant to affirm that all Cinque-Cento glass paintings had complicated foreground groups, but only that many of them had, as any one possessing but a trifling acquaintance with the style cannot but admit; and, secondly, that I never affirmed that the Brussels windows in particular had such groups. The original paper, which was published in your paper, and my former letter to *THE BUILDER* of the 14th August, will, I believe, in the judgment of any candid reader, bear me out in the above statements.

The next paragraph your correspondent impugns, on the ground that he finds, on examining the above-mentioned windows, "that the open ground within the architecture is filled in with considerable masses of a pale blue of a lilac tone. That there is no vestige of any thing like a background, so called—neither tree, nor building, nor distant object—all flat pale blue. That this ground has, as

he believes, been recently restored, as they say, in exact imitation of the old,—and that it is nearly like it there is no reason to doubt; but that the old would be more broken in tint, for that this is, indeed, flat to excess." To all this I might answer as before, that I never asserted that all Cinque-Cento glass paintings had landscape backgrounds; or that these windows in particular had them. But I prefer to ask your correspondent whether, in his definition of "background," in the present case, he intends to exclude the architectural accessories of the design, which do obviously, in my opinion, form part of the background of the group, and are treated as the same would be in an oil or fresco painting? If he does, I will further ask him whether a representation of plain blue sky behind a group of figures, may not fairly be called a "background"—an atmospheric one if he pleases—even though no tree, nor building, nor other distant object of like nature be shown; and inquire of those who are familiar with the style, and acquainted with these windows, whether it was not the frequent practice of the Cinque-Cento artists to employ pale blue glass, such as your correspondent describes, for representing—not "a ground" of blue, since a deeper blue was used for that purpose—but the effect of the firmament; and whether the pale blue in these windows was not used with that intention? I will admit that the restored blue is inferior to the original; but still it produces the effect of a clear sky showing itself between the soffits of the arches, and the figures; and, by apparently receding, it disengages itself from them perfectly. It therefore, as I submit, bears out my allegation, though perhaps not to the extent that the original blue glass might have done.

With regard to the last paragraph questioned by your correspondent, I readily admit that, had I been writing a treatise on the different styles of glass painting, instead of a slight sketch of them by way of introduction to another subject, I should not have failed to qualify the statement contained in it respecting the strength of the shading, by confining that strength to such a limit as would not be incompatible with the transparency of the shadow. But, notwithstanding the inadvertent generality of the statement, I think it sufficiently appears, from the whole tenor of my paper in *THE BUILDER*, that all I intended to affirm was, that a more powerful effect of light and shade is exhibited by a favourable example of the Cinque-Cento style, than by any glass painting belonging to any preceding style. I could, indeed, justify the literal correctness of my statement, but I prefer to take it in the sense I originally intended it should convey, as this will reduce the difference of opinion between your correspondent and myself to the lowest limit. He says that the Brussels windows are as light, or even lighter, in colour, than the Late Perpendicular; certainly lighter than some contemporary windows, in which I quite agree, it being a characteristic of the glass painters, especially of the Flemish school, during the Cinque-Cento period, to avoid as much as possible the use of the more positive colours. But I differ from your correspondent in thinking that these windows do not exhibit very strong contrasts of colour and of light and shade. To what is it then, that, as pictures, they owe their extraordinary distinctness of effect? It cannot be the nature of their design alone, because I have seen earlier Cinque-Cento glass paintings, similar in design to the Brussels windows, but which, being deficient in shadow, or defective in the arrangement of their colouring, are as confused in effect as a Gothic window in the most approved court-card style. Neither can it be any extraordinary depth of shadow, for, as your correspondent rightly observes, in no part of these windows is the shadow made so deep as to be opaque. Neither is it the perspective lines, for these windows appear to be almost equally in relief when the eye is so far closed as to render the perspective lines invisible; and besides, as I said before, I have seen windows, having similar perspective lines, which, notwithstanding, appear flat. On the whole, I think, it will be found

that the success of the Brussels windows depends, principally, on their contrasts of colour, and light and shade. The white mass of the architecture is contrasted with figures nearly or entirely coloured. The dark soffits of the arches are contrasted with the pale blue sky, and this again with figures or other objects, which, being darkly shaded towards their edges, appear as if they were thrown against it; as in some of the pictures of Francia and other early masters. Your correspondent has noticed the opposition of a positive blue to the pale blue, or rather grey, of the sky. In one instance the contrast is very striking; a blue shield being suspended from an archway right against the sky, causing it to retire in an extraordinary manner. Throughout the windows the principle of relief by means of sharp lights contrasted with strong, and not unfrequently hard shadows, is very perceptible, by which means distinctness is promoted without any loss of brilliancy. It would not be easy, without the aid of an engraving, to describe these windows properly, and the contrivances resorted to for producing distinctness in a material whose scale of transparent shadow is so limited; but I trust that I have stated enough to justify my assertion, that the best Cinque-Cento glass paintings are distinguished from those of the preceding styles by strong contrasts of colour, and of light and of shade—especially as your correspondent expressly admits that the Brussels windows are less flat than Late Perpendicular ones, stating that "the shaded roof and the careful perspective" in the Brussels windows "give an appearance of positive recess."

It is not my intention to question the rules which your correspondent has been so good as to lay down for the guidance of all future glass painters, further than to remark, that if rules to the like effect were applied to other kinds of painting, they would lead to the condemnation of works which have obtained the suffrages of the learned and experienced; and deservedly so, if their world-wide celebrity and popularity are entitled to any weight. Nothing is easier, or more imposing, or more dangerous, than to attempt to enunciate abstract propositions in regard to subjects whose principles are far from being thoroughly ascertained. In such cases it is often safer to trust to the suggestions of those instincts which are naturally implanted in us. Thus, in judging of a painting, the practical question is, "Does it look well?" A question which commonly receives the soundest solution from our innate perception of form and colour. Judged by this standard, I am bold enough to say that the Brussels windows, notwithstanding their supposed attempt at illusion, are admirable both in design and execution. As "a practical commentary" on this opinion, I may refer to the practice of perhaps the best glass-painter of the day, M. Capronnier, who has abandoned the comparatively flat style, seen "in the windows of the small chapel behind the high altar," for the more forcible style adopted in "his window over the altar in the Sacrament chapel,"—a window which happens to have been executed some years subsequently to those first mentioned, and not previously to them, as your correspondent erroneously states. Thus fortified, I think I was justified in recommending the introduction into St. Paul's Cathedral of windows similar in design and execution to those in the Chapel of the Miraculous Sacrament at Brussels.

C. WINSTON.

BRICK AND POTTERY CLAY IN THE EXE.

—An extensive deposit of a red matter, called "black mud," in the estuary of the Exe, has been analysed at the instance of Mr. Phillips, of Clist Honiton, and found to consist almost entirely of an earthy matter, which produces pottery equal, it is said, to that produced at Bridgewater, and bricks of a finer description than any made in the Exeter brickyards. The clays deposited in estuaries generally ought to be examined, as many of them would be found to be valuable. In fact, it was in ancient estuaries and seas chiefly that clays of all sorts, though now inland, were originally deposited.